

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEGUCI 03484 280329Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1007
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 3484

EO 11652 GDS
TAGS: PINT, SNAR, SHUM, HO
SUBJECT: NARCOTICS SCANDAL: GOH TAKES STERNER LINE

REF: (A) TEGUCIGALPA 3044, (B) TEGUCIGALPA 3331

1. HONDURAS' NARCOTICS SCANDAL, WITH ITS SENSATIONAL AND SORDID DEVELOPMENTS, AND CHARGES OF HIGH LEVEL GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT, HAS HELD PUBLIC ATTENTION FOR OVER SEVEN MONTHS. THE MOST RECENT OCCURRENCES--THE UNINFORMATIVE ARMED FORCES COMMUNIQUE (REF A) AND THE ARREST OF NEWSPAPERMAN MANUEL GAMERO-- BROUGHT AN UNPRECEDENTED AMOUNT OF CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT. CRITICS RANGED FROM LEFT TO RIGHT AND VARIED IN THEIR INTENSITY, WITH THE FAR LEFT USING THE SCANDAL TO QUESTION THE GOVERNMENT'S ENTIRE CONDUCT. NEVERTHELESS, RESPONSIBLE GROUPS SUCH AS THE FEDERATION OF HONDURAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION, THE CONFEDERATION OF HONDURAN WORKERS (CTH) AND THE MASONS HAVE ALSO CALLED FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION AND CLEAN-UP.

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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TEGUCI 03484 280329Z

2. RESPONDING TO THESE CHARGES, BOTH MINISTER OF INFORMATION LT. COL. ERIN O'CONNOR AND ARMED FORCES COMMANDER GENERAL POLICARPO PAZ HAVE ACCUSED RADICAL LEFT GROUPS OF A SYSTEMATIC CAMPAIGN TO DISCREDIT THE ARMED FORCES AND DESTROY ITS UNITY. BOTH EMPHASIZED THE CONTINUING UNITY OF THE MILITARY INSTITUTION, IN REPLY TO RUMORS OF INSTABILITY AND CHARGES THAT ONE GROUP OR

ANOTHER OF OFFICERS WAS PLANNING A COUP.

3. IN THE FACE OF WHAT O'CONNOR CALLED AN ORGANIZED EFFORT TO "DESTABILIZE THE GOVERNMENT", THE GOH TOOK STERNER ACTION THAN EXPECTED AGAINST TWO STRIKES (REF B): MEDICAL STUDENTS WERE GIVEN A TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT OFFER WHICH THEY FINALLY HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO ACCEPT; AND THE SECONDARY SCHOOL IN SAN PEDRO SULA REMAINS IN POLICE CUSTODY AFTER A SERIES OF STREET DEMONSTRATIONS.

4. NUMEROUS GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS (INCLUDING "TIEMPO" EDITORIALS), AS IF AWARE OF HAVING BEEN EXCESSIVELY CRITICAL, HAVE IN RECENT PRONOUNCEMENTS BEEN CAREFUL TO EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ARMED FORCES AS A CONTINUING INSTITUTION AND THE DANGER OF EXTREMIST GROUPS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE UNSETTLED SITUATION. THE POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE ALSO BEEN CAUTIOUS, KEEPING THEIR EYE ON THEIR MAJOR GOAL, THE PROMISED 1980 ELECTIONS.

5. COMMENT: THE EMBASSY FINDS IT INSTRUCTIVE THAT ALL COUP OR CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT RUMORS COME FROM CIVILIANS, A DEMONSTRATION OF THE MILITARY'S HERMETICISM AND RECOGNITION THAT NO CIVILIAN GROUP IS IN A POSITION TO ACT. BUT WHILE NO CIVILIAN GROUP OR ORGANIZATION IS ABLE TO CHALLENGE THE MILITARY'S PHYSICAL PREDOMINANCE, WHAT SEEMS CLEARLY TO HAVE OCCURRED IS A NOTICEABLE DECREASE IN THE PREVIOUSLY RELATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TEGUCI 03484 280329Z

GOOD REPUTATION AND PRESTIGE OF THE HONDURAN ARMED FORCES.
JARAMILLO

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